

Malvern Hills Trust

Land Management Committee

Guesten Suite, Lyttelton Well, 6 Church St, Malvern WR14 2AY

Wednesday 8 June 2023 at 7:00 pm

Present: Mr C Atkins, Mr D Baldwin, Mr R Bartholomew Dr S Braim (Chair), Mr P Clayburn, Mrs C Palmer, Dr T Parsons, Mr C Rouse, Ms H Stace, Dr D Westbury.

In attendance: Conservation Manager, Secretary to the Board, Mr Gardner (grazier), Operations Manager.

Dr Braim welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr M Davies, Mr J Michael, Mrs M Turner, CEO

2. Declarations of Interest

Mr Rouse –rights of common over Trust land.

3. Chairman's Communications

- A letter from a resident in the Purlieu had been circulated to Board members, together with the Trust's response.
- There would be an online workshop on 29 June where trustees could ask the Parliamentary Agent any questions they had about preparing a Private Bill.

4. Public Comments

There were none.

5. Grazier's report

Lambing had finished and all stock were back on the common. There had been a few problems with dogs but no serious incidents.

There had been a road accident on the B4208 earlier in the year where 5 sheep had been killed.

Mr Shale had retired from the Castlemorton Stewardship scheme, but was still grazing a few sheep on the common. The remaining graziers planned to meet to discuss how to increase stock numbers to take up the surplus grazing.

Cattle were on British Camp, targeting areas where scrub clearance had been carried out over the winter. There had been a graziers' meeting about long term TB strategy.

Grazing by cattle on Ragged Stone Hill was being regulated with the use of GPS collars. Collars were not accurate enough for use on sensitive sites or where grazing boundaries ran close to paths. The other advantage of electric fencing was that it was clear to the public where they might expect to encounter cattle.

6. Operations Manager's report

The grass cutting season was underway. Earlier in the year, the ground had been too wet to use machinery. Other jobs undertaken by the Field Staff team included drainage work, installing pedestrian gates at the Purlieu, Ballards Land and at Old Hollow and checking quarry fencing.

A new member of staff had joined the team in April. She had settled in well. A new compact tractor had been delivered.

One of the flail mowers had a mechanical problem and would need to be either repaired or replaced.

Grass was being cut to about 3 – 4 inches in length.

7. Matters arising from previous meeting

There were none.

8. Management Plan for Swinepit Roughs

The Conservation Manager went through the paper and drew attention to the national guidance from the Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust. The paper also included research on the history of the woodland.

The value of each non-native species had been considered when producing the plan.

The following points were made:

- The Trust needed to be clear on its position on the use of non-native species going forward. If the Trust felt some non-native species in the woodland were having a positive effect and would therefore not be removed, would the Trust then replace them with non-native species when they died? Native species needed to be used to support native wildlife, although the position was complicated by climate change (some non-native species would be more tolerant of hotter, drier summers). The Conservation Manager said there was not a definite answer. A positive effect of a non-native tree could be its landscape value rather than purely ecological benefit (eg blue cedars in Thirlstane Road). There was a debate amongst conservationists and forestry experts about whether tree species from southern Europe should be planted to take account of future climate change. The advice set out in the paper was that at least 80% of the canopy should be native tree species.
- Some benign non-native species had been present for so long they were considered "honorary" native species – eg Little Owl.

On the proposal of Dr Braim, seconded by Ms Stace it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend adoption of the management plan for Swinepit Roughs to the Board.

9. Conservation Manager's report

Construction of the agricultural building at Colwall Lands would start in July.

FIPL grant applications were being made for fencing and access infrastructure for the two grass fields at Evendine Lane. Grants, if awarded, would cover about two thirds of the total cost.

The Trust had considered the land for sale at Little Malvern, but it was not of interest for the Trust.

Staff were having to water the trees which had been planted recently because of the dry weather.

The police had been checking Gullet Quarry on a regular basis.

Trust staff had been kept very busy with utility company work on Trust land.

The Trust only had 2 wardens at present. Conservation and Field Staff were stepping in where necessary. Two new wardens were due to commence employment at the end of June.

Research was continuing into how to protect Castlemorton Common from vehicle damage. The Conservation Manager met with an officer from Malvern Hills District Council to discuss the feasibility of using CCTV. To be effective this required a mains electricity supply. He would be discussing the options at a meeting of 4Cs in July.

A project progress report had been sent out. The Conservation Manager reported that work on the ponds at Castlemorton had to be postponed because of the wet weather earlier in the year.

10. Outdoor visits 2023

A visit would be scheduled for Castlemorton Common during the summer.

11. Urgent business

There was none.

12. Date of next meeting

To be advised - next scheduled meeting: 7 December 2023.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm